



ACCESSIBLE NEWS N° 27

CSUN Wrap-Up

- by Mary Frances Laughton

The 21st Technology & Disability Conference (CSUN) drew more than 3,000 participants and 175 exhibitors over its four-day run next to the Los Angeles Airport. Once again, there was a very visible contingent of Canadians exhibiting, presenting and attending the show. The Industry Canada booth was staffed by Mary Frances Laughton, Chuck Letourneau and for her first CSUN, Ilham Monzer. Visitors to the Industry Canada booth were steady throughout the conference and interest in Canadian assistive technology, products, systems and services and in Canada as a country remains high and enthusiastic. We provided a listing of the 11 Canadian booths on the showfloor, the number of which surprised many visitors.

We demonstrated the Accessible Procurement Toolkit (www.apt.gc.ca) and showcased product literature from over 30 of our industry partners. We were able to provide specific information on some products to booth visitors and for those looking for a broader idea of what Canadian companies have to offer, we handed out a kit of information. For those companies where there were specific questions/comments, we have sent detailed emails.

By having a place to meet, Industry Canada provides a focus for Canadians doing business at the conference. The large Canadian flag and our distinctive red and white draperies in a sea of blue booths make us easy to spot in the exhibit hall and we are always happy to have our industry representatives make use of our location in support of their business networking activities.

The planned keynote speaker was unable to attend the meeting due to visa problems so Dr. Harry Murphy, the Founder of the CSUN Center on Disabilities pitched in.

Our Canadian flag pins continue to be a popular give away. Nearly everyone has a positive story to relate about Canada when they come by the booth.

We heard very positive comments on the papers given by our Canadian colleagues. The conference programme can be found at:

www.csun.edu/cod/conf/

As part of our work in LA, we provided information on the standards and business aspects of importing accessible cell phones into Canada, discussed the ability of Canada and the US to better share electronic information materials through improved copyright permissions, provided information on employment in the disability field in

Canada and provided information on the accessibility aspects of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We answered questions on business, investment and tourism opportunities in Canada and we responded to enquiries from companies looking for Canadian distributors for their products.

During the conference, we ran a small four-question survey on the Canadian AT industry developed by the University of New Brunswick with whom we are doing a contract study on the size and scope of the industry.

We came away with more than 30 business cards, each of which has an action on the back. Some want more information on investing. Some want to be remembered to friends not present this year. A number of visitors to our booth told us that they were familiar with our newsletter, Accessible News as it had been passed along to them by colleagues and they asked to be added to our distribution list.

There was a lovely memorial tribute to Dr. Russell Smith of HumanWare who was killed in a plane crash last summer. This was an opportunity for his many friends and colleagues who come together at CSUN each year to pay one last tribute to him.

We also had enquiries about some of the products and systems that were developed by companies that have gone out of business. Even though these companies have left the market for various reasons, the accessible technologies they developed continue to enhance Canada's reputation for leading-edge AT development. It also makes the fact that licences were picked up by companies such as Compusult and Sight Enhancement Systems for some of the products developed by now-defunct companies or ones divesting parts of their product lines all that much sweeter.

Clearly, Canadian companies are developing products and systems that international industrial partners recognize as must-haves to integrate with their own technology!

UNB & ADIO Partner on AT Industry Assessment

Beginning earlier this year ADIO entered into a partnership with Ed Biden and the University of New Brunswick to do an assessment of the Assistive Devices Industry. Ed's research interests are in biomedical engineering and he has been involved in assistive technology for more than 20 years. For the project, Ed, along with graduate and undergraduate students, have been looking at data from the Canadian Companies Capabilities database and the extensive mailing lists used by ADIO to get an idea of where companies are distributed across the country, what their interests are and so on.

Over the next few months people and organizations on those lists will be surveyed randomly to gather more information about the industry. The objectives are to understand the industry better in terms of its objectives and also to see where and how the industry recruits employees and how the industry interacts with its clients.

Stay tuned for an update on the project in upcoming issues of Accessible News.

ADIO will be coordinating the e-mail contacts for the survey so don't delete the next message from Deb Finn!

What's new with the Accessible Procurement Toolkit

It was noted that some entries in the Accessible Procurement Toolkit's (www.apt.gc.ca) procurement clauses database were actually describing implementation or usage advice rather than procurement requirements that could be applied in a purchasing document. For that reason, a new link has been added for products or services where such advice is available. Look for the Advice link.

The Search page has been substantially revised. You can now search for entries in the Products/Services, Requirements, Advice, and Environmental factors database by keyword. The keyword-search Results page has also been updated: keywords are highlighted for easy identification.

A new series of drawings have been added to the toolkit to help illustrate some universal design concepts as they apply to products and services. Links to these new resources appear in the requirements of a product, where appropriate. The Design Resources page has direct links to the new information.

A New Company with Old Roots Provides Computer Access Hardware for the AT Market

Dr. Geoffrey Webb, President of Daedalus Technologies, and Jim Meldrum have teamed up to form Adaptive Computer Control Technologies Inc. (or ACCT). Daedalus Technologies is manufacturer of the Daessy mounting system for augmentative communication devices and has been in the Assistive Technology Industry for over 20 years.

According to Jim Meldrum, ACCT will draw on Daedalus' experience but take a different direction with products that "aim to improve the independence of computer users with alternative access requirements". Currently ACCT's product line includes:

Ergodex DX-1, Adaptive Keyboard with moveable and programmable keys;
SecondGuess WriteAssist, word prediction/completion software for Dyslexics;
Daessy, adjustable workstations for wheelchair access;
ACCT - TowerPower, a switch access device to turn a PC on and off; and
ACCT - IndeMouse, a device for computer users who cannot click.

According to Mr. Meldrum, there are more products on the way. ACCT designs and manufactures computer access devices for computer users with physical disabilities. The ACCT website offers a number of features including comprehensive product-information with detailed specifications and instructions, as well as a convenient and secure online ordering system.

To find out more about ACCT products visit www.acctinc.ca or contact Jim Meldrum at tel.: 1-866-731-8860 or email: jimm@acctinc.ca .

APEC TEL 33 Workshop

The APEC TEL (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation - Telecommunications and Information Working Group) 33 Workshop "APEC e-Inclusion: Bridging the Digital Divide for People with Disabilities" was held in Calgary on April 23. The workshop's intent was to facilitate cooperation between APEC economies to promote e-Inclusion for persons with disabilities. It addressed a key digital divide issue and will contribute to the development of the Asia Pacific Information Society by promoting greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in the information society, benefiting the region's economy and improving quality of life.

Four background papers written in support of the workshop: two from Canada, one from Australia and one from Japan. The moderator came from Australia and both keynote speakers were Canadians, one representing the disability community and the other from industry. Workshop presenters came from nine economies representing both the disability community and industry. Most of the presentations made during the workshop can be found on the Web at www.apectel33.ca.

There were also two technology presentations from Canadian assistive technology (AT) researchers and vendors. HumanWare showed its Victor Talking Book Machine and its Trekker GPS system. The Centre de recherche informatique de

Montréal (CRIM) gave a presentation on its groundbreaking C3Grid (Closed-Captioning computing GRID) project, which will provide multimedia content producers with improved captioning capabilities by automating key aspects of the multimedia production and post-production processes.

Workshop participants were welcomed to Canada by our boss, Keith Parsonage. He introduced the Moderator, Michael Baker from Australia, who gave a very brief overview of the day before in turn introducing Jim Sanders, President of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. Mr. Sanders told the group that designing accessibility at the beginning of a system, service, environment or product makes economic sense. "It is not rocket science." He also stated that good design principles allow persons with disabilities to benefit from the mainstream. Mr. Sanders reiterated the need for an international copyright convention that will allow all those with print disabilities to share e-materials in the same way as those who can use traditional print can share books.

The first workshop panel, "User Needs and Gap Analysis", addressed the user perspective, including the user needs and gaps that exist for people with disabilities. The case was made for using standards as a reference for product design by manufacturers and for procurement criteria within the public sector. It was suggested that standardization is instrumental in the dissemination of accessible Information and Communications Technology (ICT) products. Developing ICT accessibility standards, however, is a tough task because of the difficulty in gathering experts who understand both technologies and needs of people with disabilities. The Japanese development of the JIS X8341 series of standards which the Japanese Government and local governments now uses for procurement and for such activities as Web site development was cited as an example. The importance of literacy and the part it plays in bridging the digital divide for people with disabilities was also highlighted.

Representatives from Chinese Taipei recounted how the implementation of a Web Site Accessibility rating system raised general awareness of website accessibility, and the increased number of accessible government websites. It was noted that government leadership is a key to success and that regulation has fostered research. In addition, a point was made that accessibility initiatives need to be as broadly based as practicable and include many different disabilities.

The second panel, on "New Technologies/Devices and How Industry is Meeting the Demand", explored how industry interacts with the disability community to improve access to new technology. Noting that there are many new telecom technologies and devices which may or may not be accessible to persons with disabilities, it was stated that the number of people who benefit from accessible technology is large and will continue to grow with the aging population. Industry, governments and consumers must continue to work together to develop and work within the standards, policy and conformance infrastructure. It was stated that at least 57% of computer users are

likely to benefit from assistive technology. There is a need to inform developers and provide tools to increase accessibility for all users, not just those who have disabilities.

A moderated discussion followed the presentations in this panel. Topics included affordability and the importance of addressing accessibility needs in the design stage rather than retrofitting existing products. The effect that increasing market size has on price reduction and on shortening the time it takes to bring a product to market was also discussed and the question of what drives industry to be involved and care about accessibility was raised. There was an agreement that there needs to be more partnerships between industry and NGOs, and groups working on ATs.

The third panel was called "Regulatory and Self-Regulatory Approaches". Discussion centred on adopting regulatory measures, while striking the right balance as well as on laws and programs in two of the countries represented on the panel. The necessity of harmonizing international standards in order to achieve policy goals was also discussed. Truly global, industry-led, voluntary standards that provide customer value and facilitate market development for accessible ICT were advocated in this session.

In the fourth panel, "Design and Implementation Considerations – Opportunities and Challenges" the approach of designing telecommunication devices and services that "get it right the first time," i.e. those that are inclusive and apply to all, including people with disabilities was explored. The need to change peoples' attitudes towards the idea of a digital divide was also discussed. One economy's experience with relay services was detailed. Finally, the need for narrowing the digital divide through increased awareness, eliminating illiteracy, improving ICT access and capacity building was stressed.

The "e-Inclusion Capacity Building (Issues and Considerations): panel presented three different economies' approaches to increase capacity in their economy around eliminating the digital divide. These include DAISY Digital Talking Books, a social enterprise for marginalized women working at home facilitated by the use of ICTs and a program of services for blind consumers.

The day was very full, which allowed a number of issues to be brought up by participants. A major issue discussed was the affordability of the new accessible technologies. There was also a lot of discussion about the actual definition of e-inclusion and whether it means only people with disabilities, or if it also includes other groups of people, such as the elderly. The discussions that resulted from the workshop were very promising and many of the delegates agreed that future work would be beneficial for APEC TEL.

US Government Revises its Accessibility Regulations

- by Chuck Letourneau, Starling Access Services

On April 18, the US Access Board announced plans to create a committee to advise them on the refresh of both Section 508 standards and Section 255 guidelines. Section 508 is that part of the Rehabilitation Act that requires the US Federal government to only procure accessible electronic and information technologies. Section 255 is that part of the Telecommunications Act that informs US telephone manufacturers how to ensure their product lines include accessible technologies. The full text of the announcement can be found on the US Access Board's Web site at www.access-board.gov/news/508committee-notice.htm .

For many years, ADIO has worked to help the Government of Canada increase accessibility in the workplace by using its procurement power to drive the development of more accessible mainstream technologies and services. To this end, ADIO created the Accessible Procurement Toolkit (APT: www.apt.gc.ca), which contains not only requirement statements drawn from sources such as various Canadian Standards Association documents but also numerous citations of requirements found in Section 508 and Section 255. The APT enables procurement professionals to include accessibility requirements in their purchasing plans. The toolkit can also be used by manufacturers or vendors to identify features or design criteria that can make their products or services more accessible - especially if they wish to sell to the US Federal marketplace where such accommodations are required by law.

Feedback needed on a new web site on disability-related policy in Canada

- by Christine Kelly, University of Manitoba and Francis Charrier, Université de Laval

DisabilityPolicy.ca looks at the issues and concerns surrounding disability-related policy in Canada. This site can be viewed at www.disabilitypolicy.ca.

The site is intended to serve three main purposes:

To build the capacity of people with disabilities in general and of organizations of people with disabilities more specifically, to respond to issues regarding disability-related policy in Canada;

To be a website that is jointly owned by many organizations of people with disabilities around Canada for the purposes of knowledge-sharing, communication and mobilization; and

To allow researchers, writers and the general public to share their knowledge about the effectiveness of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) as a tool for engaging the disability community in eDemocracy initiatives.

The website arose from a need identified by the Council of Canadians with Disabilities and Canadian Association of Community Living's joint project "Connecting People to Policy". The Dis-IT Research Alliance proposed to take over the website portion of the initiative to facilitate the continuation of the goals of the project.

This site was built by a group of committed volunteers from several different organizations, including: the Canadian Association for Community Living; ARCH: A Legal Resource Centre for Persons with Disabilities; the Council of Canadians with Disabilities; Alliance of Equality of Blind Canadians; Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres; and various Independent Living Resource Centre groups. On behalf of the Advisory Committee we would like to invite you to come and browse our new site. Your feedback will be essential in making this website a truly interactive experience for people in the disability community. Please take the time to tell us what you think.

Disabilitypolicy.ca is trying to meet a high level of website design accessibility standards. If you have any suggestions that will help make our site more accessible, please contact us at:

1. Christine Kelly, Research Assistant (English)
tel.: 204-480-1411, email: umkell37@cc.umanitoba.ca

2. Francis Charrier, Research Assistant (French)
tel.: 418-529-9141 ext. 6107, email: francis.charrier.1@ulaval.ca

US Firm Seeks Tech, Captioning and Investment Partners

An American company is looking for partners to develop and launch a new service to give deaf and hard of hearing people access to radio content.

Saint Louis, Missouri-based iMobile Access Technologies plans to introduce a system that will provide real-time captioning of radio content to hearing-impaired individuals.

"We will deliver captions to the eyes of the user through our patent pending solution that consists of a receiver and an eye piece," said company founder Stephen Foster, who is himself deaf. "The eye piece projects the captions into the users' field of view

and is portable; this allows the user to engage in simultaneous activity while 'watching' radio."

The company's Chief Technical Officer, Hari (Sam) Samrat says iMAT currently is seeking technology partners, captioning partners and deaf and hard of hearing organizations to participate in various aspects of the launch of the service.

The company's system will use voice recognition and context-based language processors, in conjunction with humans to caption radio programming in real time with a maximum delay of two to three seconds between what is spoken and what is displayed. The company is therefore very interested in identifying captioners and captioning organizations willing to work with it to refine that part of the system.

The company has obtained seed funding for the system, but it is also seeking additional investors. Meanwhile, work continues on the development of a beta version of the caption display.

To find out more about the company and the project, contact Stephen Foster, CEO, iMobile Access Technologies, 210 North Tucker Blvd. Saint Louis, Missouri, USA 63101 tel.: 314-333-0430, email: sfoster@imobileaccess.com .

News Bits

On April 28, ICICI Bank Canada honoured Jim Sanders, the President and CEO of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind at its Second Annual Helen Keller Awards Dinner. The event was held at the Ontario Science Centre in Toronto and featured a special screening of a film called "Black", a contemporary version of the Helen Keller story, produced in India. ICICI Bank Canada, a subsidiary of India's second-largest bank, is currently engaged in raising funds for the Canadian Helen Keller Centre, which provides services and training opportunities for deaf-blind Canadians.

In March, Compusult (www.compusult.nf.ca) supplied Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona with three TeleTalk systems to provide full accessibility to Fujitsu telephones for their blind and visually impaired employees. The company continues to supply its Caption Display units to the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) so they can make their video presentations fully accessible to deaf and hearing impaired park visitors. Also in March, they sold their 14th unit to the NPS. This one will be installed at a National Park in California. And from April 20 to 22, Compusult participated in BARRIER FREE 2006 in Osaka, Japan demonstrating their Jouse2, 2-Switch, U-Switch, Scotty LapTop Tray Systems, and other products to a huge number of conference attendees. This is the second year that Compusult has participated in the Canadian booth at this event.

Ottawa's NetCentric (www.net-centric.com) recently announced the availability of a free PDF accessibility evaluation service for its Government clients. Called CommonLook Accessibility for PDF, the product is currently in use in both the Government of Canada and the American government. The service, which can be found at: www.net-centric.com/documents/english/cl_adobe_home.asp, allows clients to assess the accessibility of their PDF holdings, including documents that contain complex tables or forms. For more information, contact Andrew Oestereich at 613-270-9582, ext. 204 or email him at aoestereich@net-centric.com.

Work has begun on the revision of the Canadian Standards Association's (CSA: www.csa.ca) accessibility standard B651.1 Barrier-Free Design for Automated Banking Machines. This document was originally published in 2001 and is subject to the CSA's normal review and update cycle for existing standards. Deb Finn is on the committee developing the new version of the standard, which is expected to be available in 2008.

Canadian accessibility experts continue to have a worldwide influence on Web accessibility. This year alone, Derek Featherstone of Further Ahead (www.furtherahead.com), an Ottawa-based accessibility consultancy, will be speaking and training in San Francisco, Texas, the UK and Australia, as well as keynoting a conference in Florida. "We've got some top-notch accessibility people in Canada with a great deal of experience in development, testing, user experience and all aspects of Web accessibility. Audiences at these conferences are eager to hear what we've learned and sessions fill up quickly. Whether for ethical or legal concerns, they are enthusiastic about making the Web universally accessible and want in-depth information on specific Web development techniques," says Featherstone. Further Ahead also provides in-house technical training and accessibility audits for government agencies and the private sector in Ottawa and throughout Canada. For more information, contact Derek Featherstone via email at feather@furtherahead.com, or call Further Ahead at: 613-599-9784 or 1-866-932-4878 (toll-free in North America).

On June 6, HumanWare Canada announced the launch of the French version of Window-Eyes. This screen reader software for blind and visually impaired users is manufactured by GW Micro and HumanWare did the French version, which is now available direct from HumanWare. For more information, call HumanWare Canada at 1-888-723-7273, email them at ca.info@humanware.com or visit their Web site at www.humanware.ca.

A group of eleven national disability organizations and resource persons have begun working with Canada's major telecommunications companies (Bell Canada, Allstream Inc., Saskatchewan Telecommunications, TELUS Communications Inc., Aliant Telecom Inc., Société en commandite Télébec and the former TELUS Communications (Québec) Inc.) on the development of a series of projects intended

to improve the accessibility and usability of Canada's telecommunications systems and services. The telecom companies were directed by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunication Commission to earmark at least 5% each of the money held in their deferral accounts to be used in accessibility projects. On June 5, the disability groups met to develop their strategies for working with the telecoms. On the 6, the disability groups met with the telecoms and began the process of establishing a collaborative effort that will culminate in the development of accessibility project proposals. Cathy Moore of the CNIB arranged the meeting, which was held in Toronto. The first day of the meeting was funded by DisIT and the telecoms picked up the tab for Day 2.

On June 16, the CNIB Library awarded the Dr. Dayton M. Forman Memorial Award to Canada Post to honour the 100 years of "free matter for the blind". This system, part of an international agreement, allows braille and audio materials for the blind to be sent post-free. This award has previously been won by Industry Canada.

Our Web Site

Our Web site can be found at www.at-links.gc.ca. At this site are all our old newsletters as well as different listings and links to other sites of interest. Should you be using these old newsletters, please bear in mind that the web addresses were correct when the newsletter was created but that they may not be accurate now. We do not plan to change the back issues of the newsletters.

Communications from ADIO

If you would prefer to receive our newsletter on disk or by e-mail, please contact us at the address below.

Where to Find Us

For more information or to get on our mailing list, please contact:

Mary Frances Laughton or Deb Finn
Assistive Devices Industry Office
Industry Canada
P.O. Box 11490 Station H
Ottawa, Ontario
K2H 8S2

tel: 613-990-4316 or 613-990-4297
fax: 613-998-5923
TTY: 613-998-3288
email: adio@crc.ca

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